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On the Cover: Texas A&M Men's Basketball is ready to dance. Photo by Rob Havens '88.



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Howdy Ags!

Well, plenty has happened since our last issue. Congratulations to our volleyball team for winning their first SEC Championship! Our soccer team surprised the country by taking a young squad and getting within one match of a return trip to the College Cup. Big changes occurred with our football program, including the hiring of a new offensive coordinator, Noel Mazzone! We also said goodbye to Eric Hyman and hello to Texas A&M's new Director of Athletics, Scott Woodward.

The football team generated plenty of news in December and January, and inside this issue is a recap of all the breaking news. The staff is now wrapping up the next recruiting class, which we will feature in our next issue. The program also announced that the Maroon & White game will return to Kyle Field on April 9th during Parent's Weekend, allowing fans to finally see the Aggies during the spring. I'm looking forward to seeing what changes are made under the direction of Coach Mazzone on the offensive side of the ball.

The team creating most of the buzz around campus is our men's basketball team. Reed Arena has been filled for home games, and the team went on an eleven game winning streak, propelling the program to its highest ever ranking of #5 in the nation. With a mixture of seniors and talented young players, Billy Kennedy has his team ready to go to the Big Dance! Aggie basketball has become a hot ticket, and fans are excited to be a part of it.

Not to be outdone, our women's basketball team is currently ranked in the top twenty and have had some very exciting, close games. If you haven't made it to a women's game yet, you need to check it out. Inside is an interview with Jordan Jones, in which you will learn about her road back from injury to lead the team.

Aggie baseball begins soon, and Coach Childress talks about this year's team that has been ranked in the USA Today Coaches Poll as the preseason #4 team in the country. Expectations are high as the Ags return lots of experience and plenty of arms on the mound from a team that almost made it to Omaha last year.

Inside you will also find Coach Jo Evans' thoughts about this year's softball team. She has a young squad with lots of talent, and she seems really excited about what the ladies will accomplish this year.

Spring sports are in full gear, and all of our teams are competing for championships! It's a great time to be an Aggie sports fan!

Gig'em Ags!

Rob '88




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Aggieland

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capacity crowds...

With the resurgence of the men's basketball program, Reed Arena has once again become a major home court advantage. The 12th Man distracts a Missouri free throw shooter in the Aggies 66-53 trouncing of the Tigers. The victory propelled the Aggies into the #5 spot in the polls, breaking the previous mark of #6 as the highest ranking ever in program history.

Photo by Rob Havens '88.









resumé builder...

Danuel House throws down a huge dunk against former Big 12 rival Baylor. House called the 80-61 dismantling of the Bears a "resumé builder." The

Aggies avenged last year's loss to BU in Waco and gave the 12th Man plenty to cheer about. As the seconds ticked down, the students chanted, "You're still Baylor" to the delight of the partisan crowd.

Photo by Rob Havens '88.

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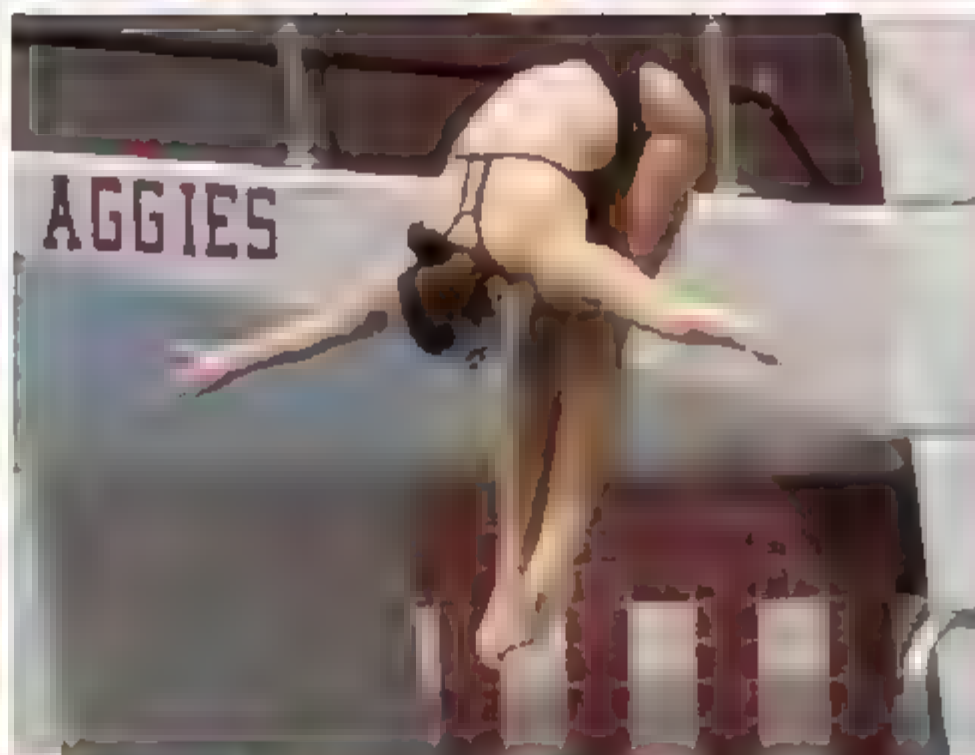
**JUST NORTH OF UNIVERSITY
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[men's basketball] Aggie Basketball has made great strides this season. The team got off to a great start and moved all the way up to #5 in the polls (the highest ranking ever). After suffering some tough losses during a rough stretch of the season, the men are battling to get back in the conference race. They are still in position to make the tournament but will have to finish strong to get a higher seed.

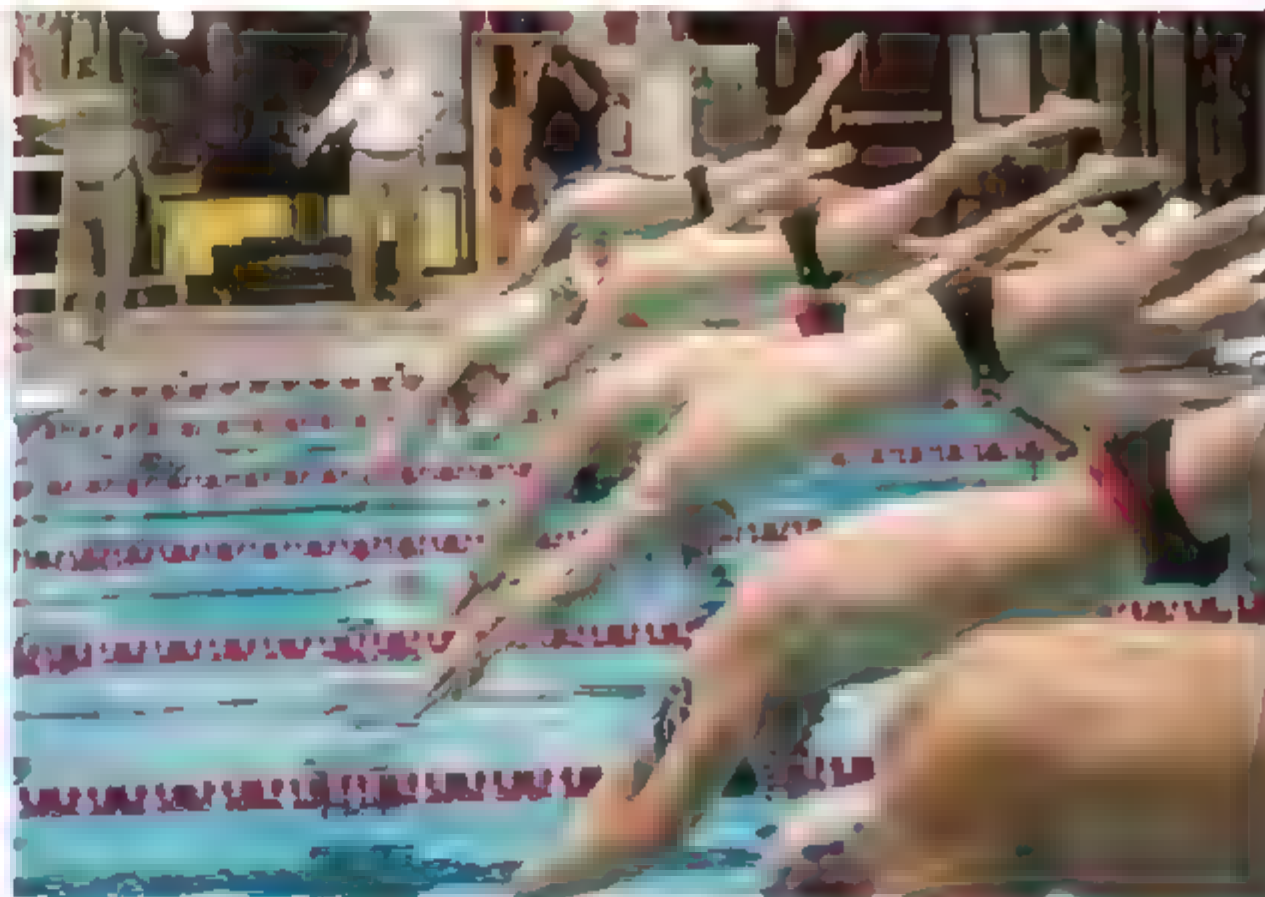
[women's tennis] The #9 Women's Tennis Team got off to a great start under new head coach Mark Weaver. The Aggies shut out #15 Baylor in Waco and once again look to make waves in the SEC. Fielding a veteran squad and the addition of new assistant coach Patrick Sullivan, this team hopes to compete for a chance to win it all.





[volleyball] Aggie Volleyball had the most successful conference season in school history, winning fifteen straight matches before being eliminated in the second round of the NCAA tourney. The Ags won their first ever conference championship and collected the SEC trophy in front of a capacity crowd at Reed Arena.

[women's swimming & diving] The #6 Women's Swimming & Diving Team posted a 7-2 overall record in the 15-16 dual meet schedule. They wrapped up the regular season with a 181-119 win over the #23 LSU Tigers and will now prepare for the SEC and NCAA Championships.

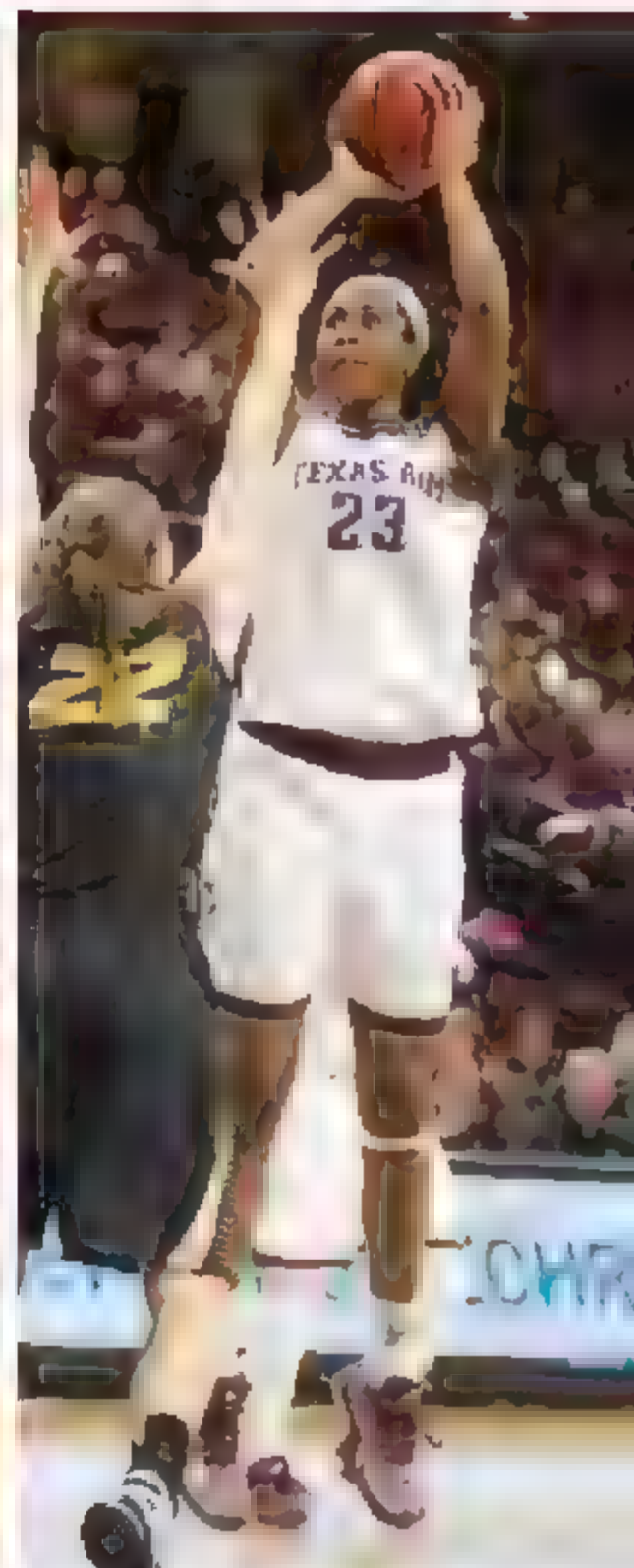
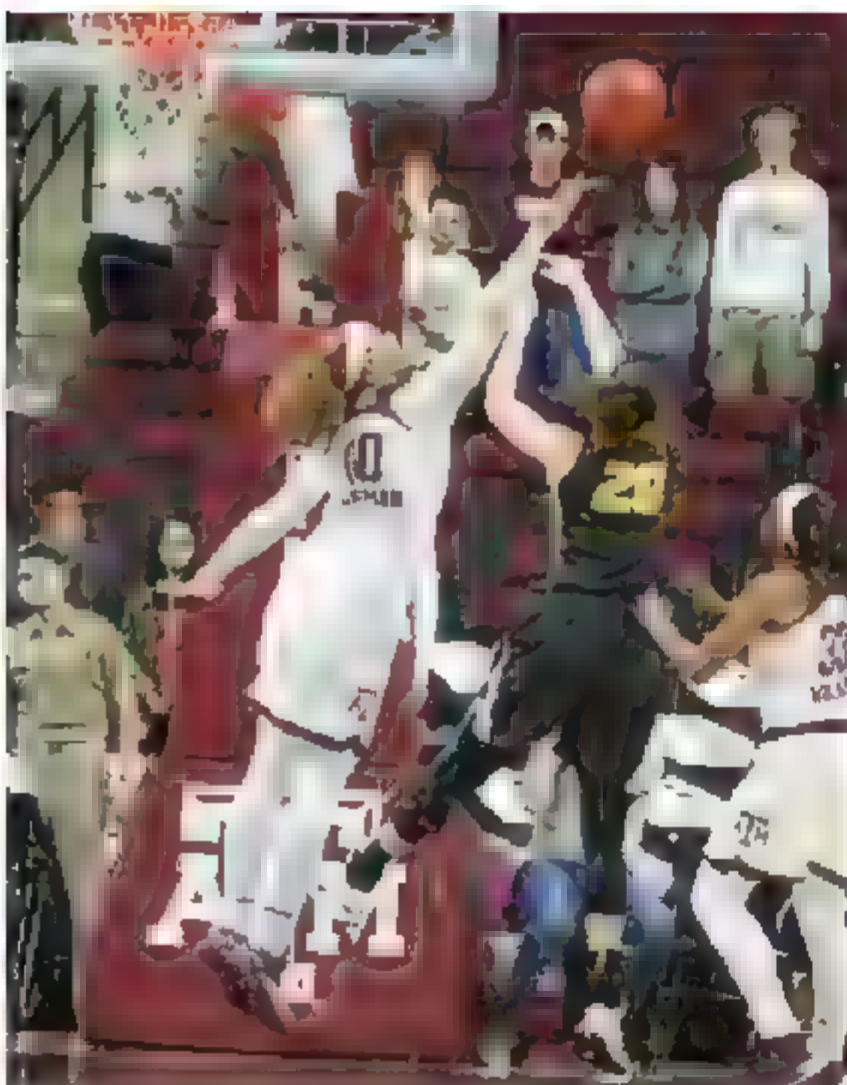


[men's swimming & diving] The Men's Swimming & Diving Team wrapped up the regular season with a 7-1 record. They defeated #22 LSU on the road and will now set their sights on an SEC championship, followed by a trip to the NCAA's.

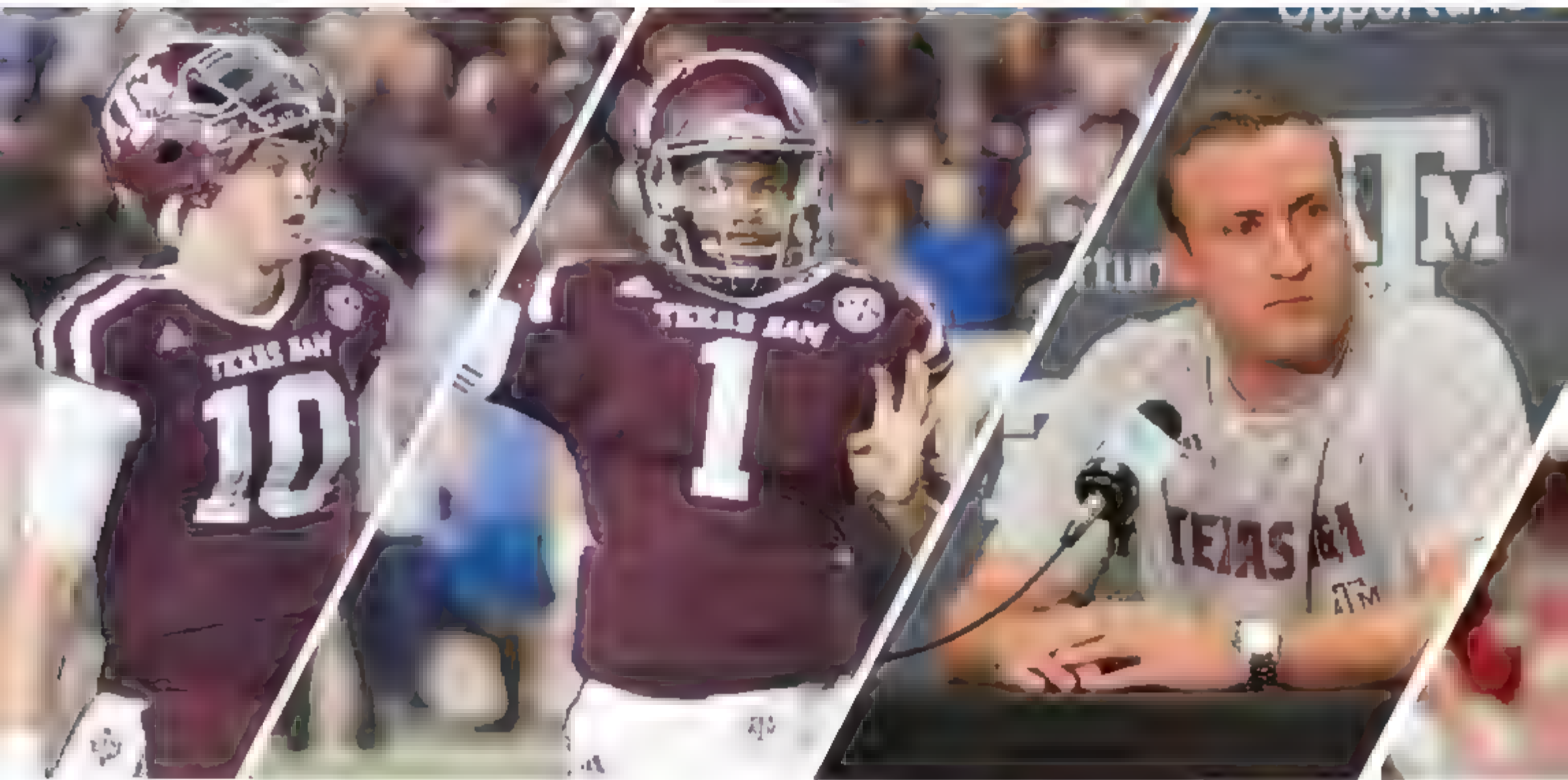


[women's basketball] Gary Blair once again has his team playing at a high level as the #10 ranked women's team is number two in the SEC and in great position to win the conference. The senior-led squad has all of the pieces necessary to make a deep run in the NCAA tournament. The team has won close games at home and on the road, including a 72-66 overtime win over Duke in North Carolina.

[soccer] What was supposed to be a rebuilding year for the Aggie Soccer Team turned out to be a trip to the Elite Eight. The young squad won three matches in the NCAA tourney, including a 1-0 victory over #8 North Carolina. It took a great performance from #2 Florida State (the defending national champions) to eliminate the team from the tournament.



BREAKING



Texas A&M Football became a regular on the news ticker at the bottom of the ESPN Sports Center broadcast during what is normally a fairly quiet time at the end of the football season. The Aggies kept the 12th Man busy checking social media for updates, and a peaceful holiday season turned into an anxious few weeks that kept us all a little nervous about the future of the program.

With rumors brewing about a change at offensive coordinator and the frequent rotation of quarterbacks throughout the season, most Aggies believed we would lose one of our five star QB's. But most fans were shocked to find out it would be the current starter, Kyle Allen, and that it would happen before the bowl game. On December 10th, A&M announced that Allen would be transferring out of the program. It was an unprecedented move, with the leader of the squad leaving on his team during the season. Allen tweeted that he wished things would have worked out, "but at some points in life, people have to do what's best for them."

The decision seemed to allow the Aggies to move forward with their other five star quarterback, but just six days later, news broke that Kyler Murray was going to transfer as well. On the first day the team returned for bowl practice, Murray was a no-show. Coach Sumlin told the media that he had some personal things going on, that he wasn't feeling well, and that he had told him to stay home. When questioned about the bowl, Coach Sumlin confidently told us that Murray would be the starter. Less than twenty-four hours later, A&M announced that Kyler had been granted his release.

If losing one five star QB during the season was unprecedented, losing two was something out of a Twilight Zone episode. The Aggies had less than two weeks to prepare third string quarterback Jake Hubenak to lead the Ags to a bowl victory. Murray, who many believed would follow in his dad's footsteps and lead our team to a championship, wound up signing with Oklahoma a few days later and will have to sit out of football

and baseball for the next year.

The Aggies fought valiantly in the Music City Bowl, and after a tough start, Hubenak battled back and gave the Aggies a chance to win. Unfortunately, it was not to be and the Aggies ran out of time, falling to Louisville 27-21. Four days later, the Aggies made news again when they announced the mutual decision to part ways with offensive coordinator Jake Spavital. The news ended a month-long period of speculation about the young coach's future with the team.

A report then came out of Houston that Allen would be transferring to Coach Sumlin's previous team to suit up for U of H. On the same day, the Aggies once again made headline news when the athletic department announced that Eric Hyman would be stepping down but would stay on until a new athletic director was hired. Although it seems that the football issues and the AD opening had little to do with each other, the national media began to report about the instability of the program.

IG NEWS



With only two scholarship quarterbacks on the team, and one of them being primarily a holder for field goals, the staff had to move fast to try and secure another quarterback that could compete and play for the Aggies in next year's campaign. Graduate transfer from Oklahoma, Trevor Knight, swooped in to save the day. The 6'1", 207-pound signal caller was the MVP of the Sugar Bowl against Alabama after the 2013 season. He brings a great attitude and a dual threat presence to the Aggie backfield. In his first statement, Knight told fans, "I appreciate the opportunity Coach Sumlin and his staff have afforded me, and I look forward to making my last year of eligibility a memorable one."

Aggie fans were still anxiously watching twitter for news on the new offensive coordinator when reports came out that UCLA OC Noel Mazzone was flying in to meet with Sumlin. Within hours, reports came out stating that he would be the new offensive coordinator. But at the end of the day, social media insiders claimed that Mazzone had flown

back to California without a signed deal and would be considering the offer. Fortunately, news came out early the next day that Mazzone had accepted a three year deal and that his son, Taylor Mazzone, who was UCLA's QB coach, would be joining him in Aggieland. Coach Mazzone, who previously coached alongside Sumlin in Minnesota, has SEC experience and has had a long and successful career. He spent the last four years at UCLA putting up big offensive numbers. He said, "I am excited about the opportunity to work with Coach Sumlin and the Aggie football team, and I am ready to get started."

Finally, on January 8th, the rollercoaster ride of breaking news finished with the announcement of a new athletic director. Former University of Washington AD Scott Woodward would be the new director of athletics for Texas A&M. Woodward is an LSU grad that worked with A&M's President Young when the two were both at Washington. Woodward said, "It is an honor to join the Aggie Family, and I am humbled and grateful for the opportunity

that President Young has afforded me. Texas A&M is an outstanding university and athletic program competing in what is arguably the best conference in college sports. I can promise the Aggie faithful that we will compete for championships across the board, and we will do so with integrity, class, and a commitment to our student-athletes. I couldn't be more excited to get started."

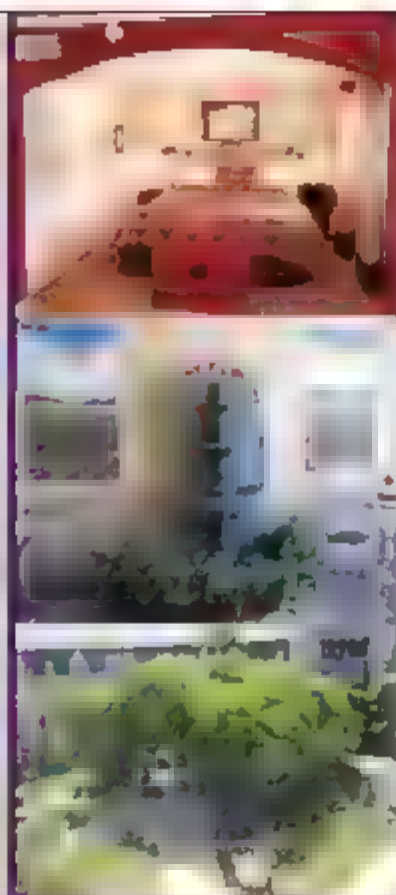
The breaking news stories from December 10th to January 10th gave us all an unforgettable ride. Texas A&M's national brand, along with some historic changes, made for front page headline scoop that had the whole country wondering what was going on at Texas A&M. Let's hope these changes help our program get the kind of headline news we are looking for, like an SEC Championship or, better yet, an NCAA Championship. It's about time we see the confetti fall on our Maroon and White uniforms!



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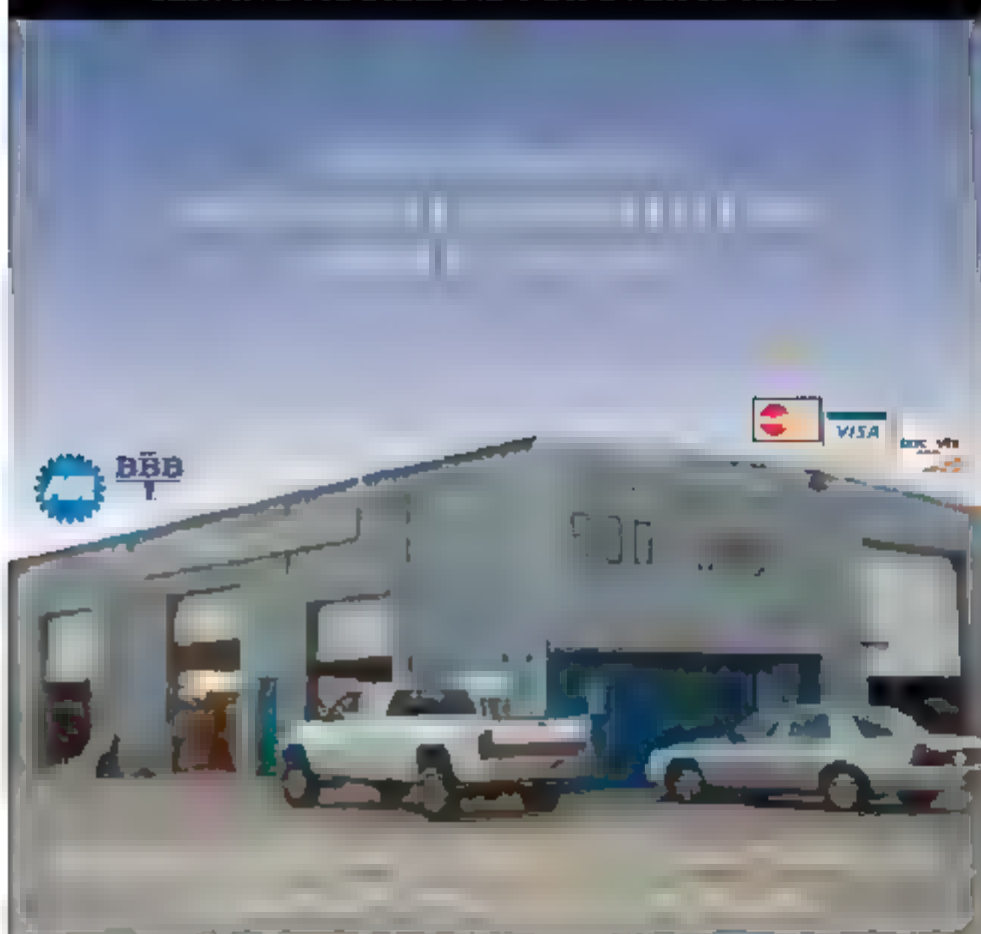
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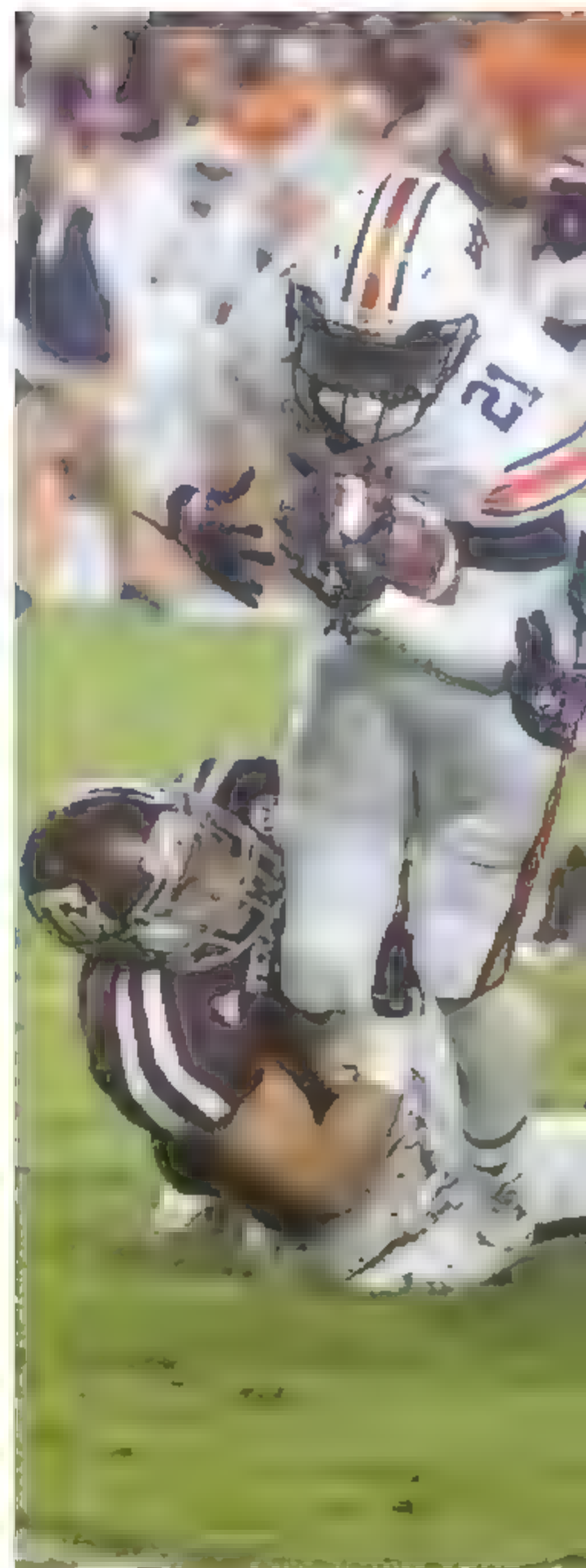
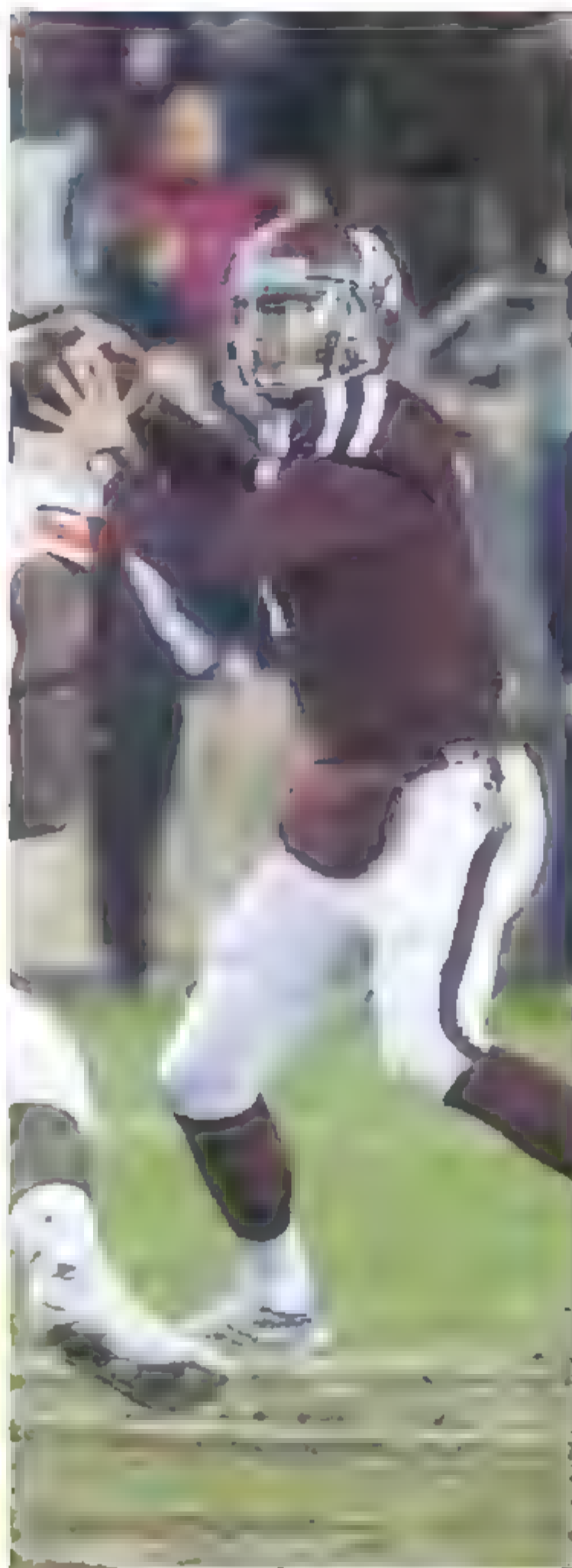
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[GAME 9: AUBURN 26, A&M 10]



▲ PHOTOS OF THE GAME

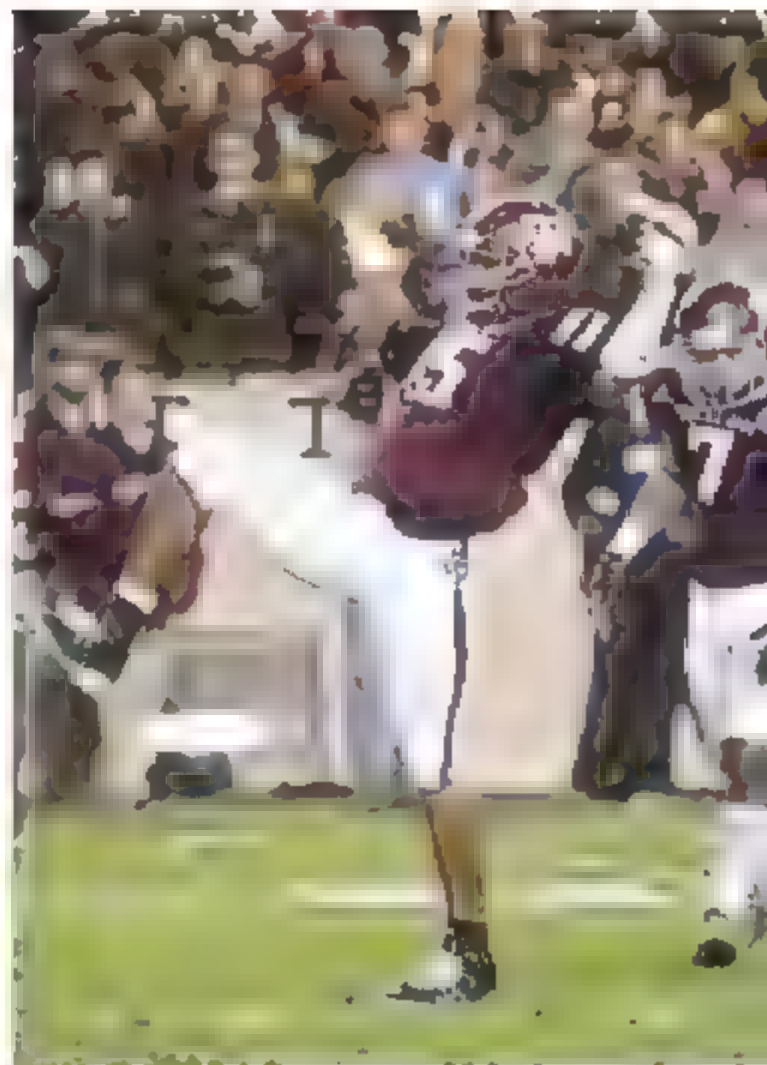


vs



Coming off the big win against South Carolina, the Aggies, under the direction of Kyler Murray, looked to add to their momentum. The Tigers were pre-season favorites to compete for the SEC title, but they limped into Kyle Field with a 4-4 record. New starting quarterback Jeremy Johnson sparked the Auburn offense as they jumped on the Aggies 14-3 early in the second quarter. Kyler Murray threw three interceptions during the game before being knocked out late in the third after taking a blow to the head. Jake Hubenak replaced Murray and completed a touchdown pass to Speedy Noil for the Aggies' only touchdown. Tra Carson ran for 109 yards on the day, giving the talented senior his first back-to-back 100-yard games. Armani Watts led the team with thirteen tackles, including eight solo stops. Taylor Bertolet kicked another 50-yard field goal, which gave the Aggies the early lead in the game. The wet and dreary night came to an end with the Aggies losing a 26-10 decision.

[GAME 10: **A&M 41**, WESTERN CAROLINA 17]

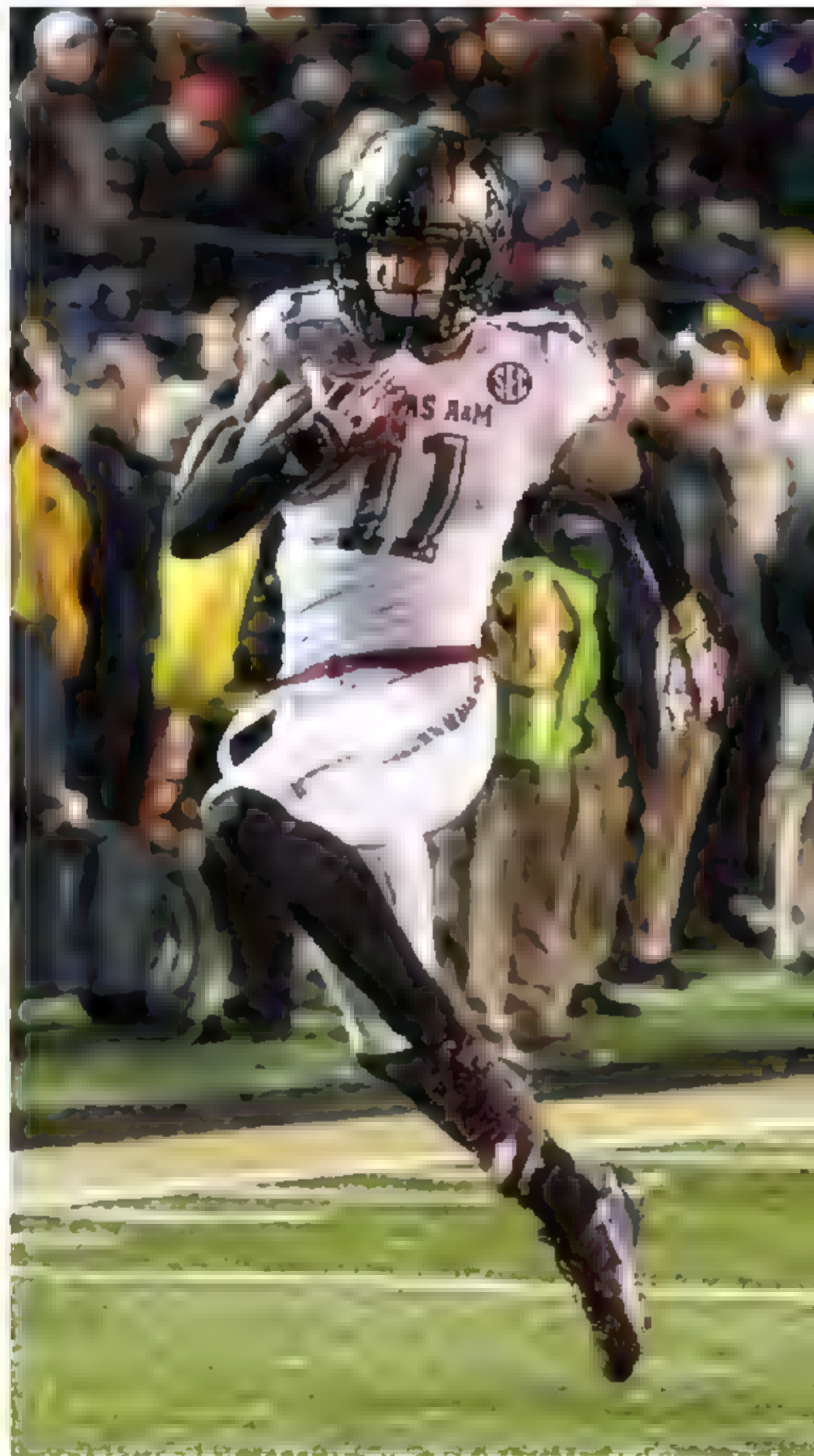


▲ PHOTOS OF THE GAME



The Aggies rebounded from a difficult loss to Auburn with a big 41-17 win over Western Carolina on Senior Night. The Ags started slow but finally got the offense cranked up as Murray threw for 191 yards and three touchdowns. Christian Kirk paced the wide receivers with nine catches for 122 yards and two touchdowns. The team had 583 total yards on offense, while the defense held WCU to only 302. Nine different receivers had catches and four running backs earned positive yards as the Ags had 304 yards on the ground. Kyle Allen returned to the gridiron late in the game, going 6-for-6 for 88 yards and a touchdown. Tra Carson once again eclipsed the 100-yard mark for the third game in a row, tallying 109 yards. The defense had ten tackles for losses in the contest, and Justin Dunning got his first interception as an Aggie. Eighteen seniors took Kyle Field for the last time, posting a 19-9 record for the class of 2015 at home.

[GAME 11: **A&M 25**, VANDERBILT 0]



▲ PHOTOS OF THE GAME

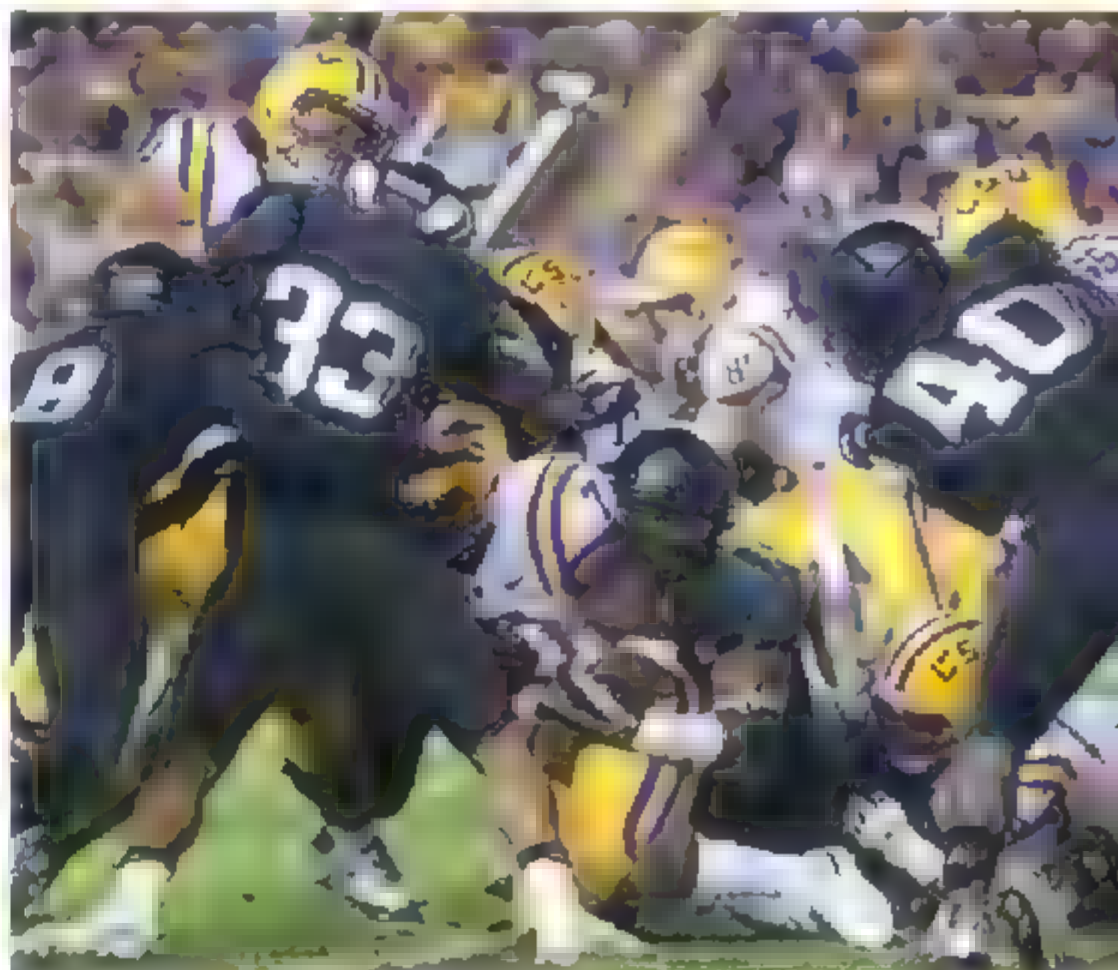


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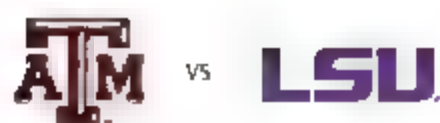


After a very sharp series at the end of the WCU game and a week of practice, the coaching staff decided to start Kyle Allen under center in the Vandy game. The sophomore responded by passing for 336 yards and one touchdown in the Aggies' win over the Dores. But it was the leg of Taylor Bertolet that was the difference as the senior matched a school record of six field goals in a game. Taylor connected on 31, 25, 46, 46, 41 and 23 yards during the contest. The Aggie defense pitched a shutout, holding Vandy to 148 total yards and 23 passing yards. It was the first time since 2004 that an Aggie defense kept the other team scoreless. The team's only touchdown was a 95-yard reception by Josh Reynolds on third and long. The catch matched the record for second longest touchdown reception in program history. The Aggies' success under Sumlin continued as the team improved their record to 18-5 away from Kyle Field.

[GAME 12: LSU 19, A&M 7]

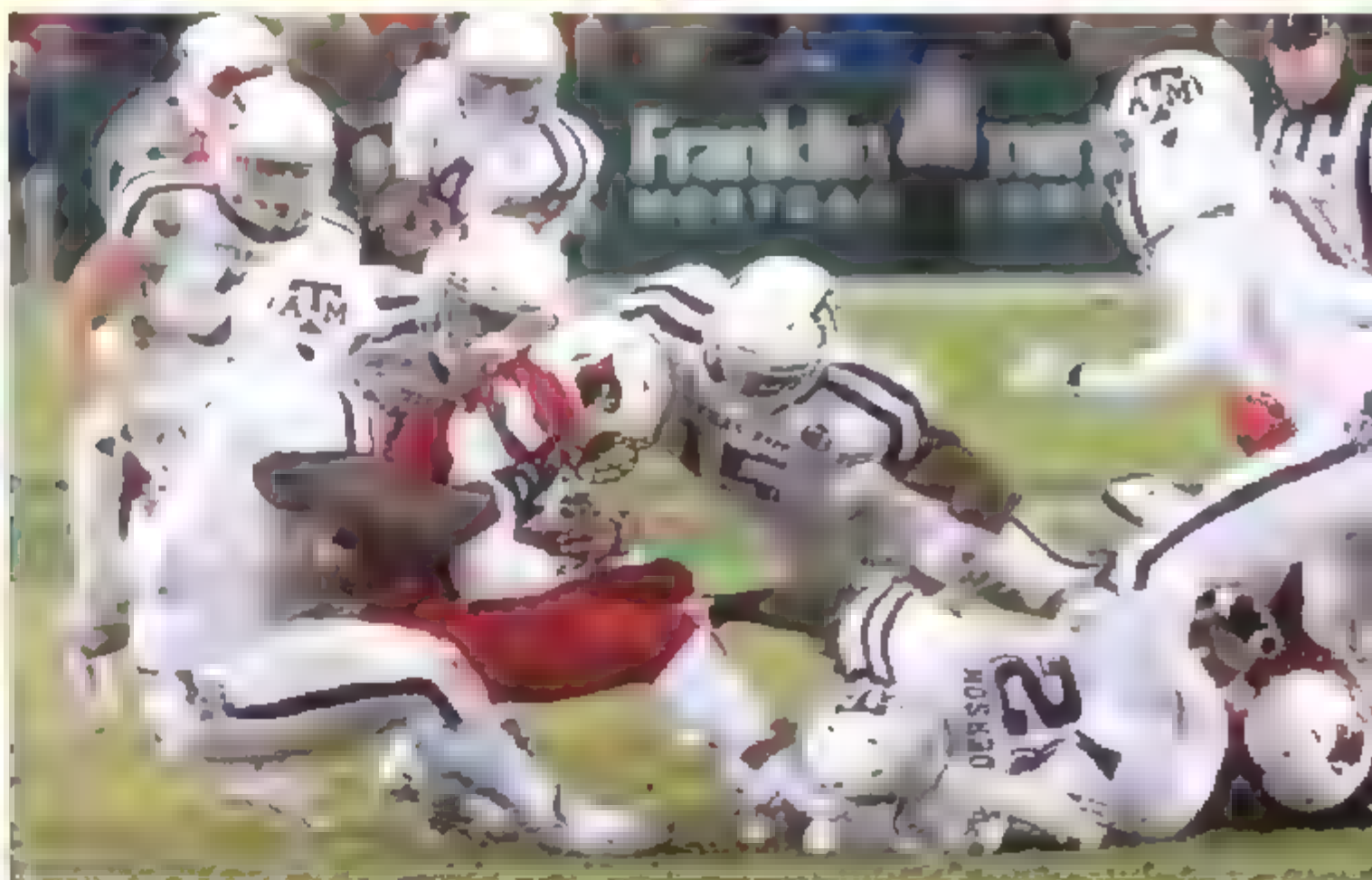


▲ PHOTOS OF THE GAME



Going into the final game of the regular season, the Aggies still had plenty to play for. A nine-win season would place the team in a Florida bowl and give them the opportunity to finish with ten wins in the toughest division in college football. On top of that, Coach Chavis was returning to Baton Rouge for the first time, and the team was hungry to get him a win. Facing one of the best running backs in the country, the Aggie defense played its heart out, holding the Tigers to only nineteen points. But once again, the offense struggled under the leadership of Allen and could only produce one score. Tra Carson eclipsed the 1,000-yard mark and Christian Kirk recorded 130 all-purpose yards to break the freshman single season record. Myles Garrett got another sack, bringing his total on the year to 11.5. Linebacker Shaan Washington had a career high thirteen tackles in the game. The Tigers remain the only SEC West team that the Ags have not defeated since joining the conference.

[GAME 13: LOUISVILLE 27, A&M 21]



▲ PHOTOS OF THE GAME



vs



Texas A&M had every opportunity to chalk up this season and look to next year after Kyle Allen and Kyler Murray quit on them and decided to move on, but the Aggies came to play in Nashville at The Music City Bowl. With a four bowl game winning streak on the line, the Ags entered Nissan Stadium with something to prove. After a shaky start, Jake Hubenak battled and gave the Aggies a chance to win at the end. The third string QB turned starter completed twenty-eight passes for 307 yards and two touchdowns. Not bad for a guy that had two weeks to prepare. Tra Carson had another 100-yard game, giving the senior seven for the year. Kirk surpassed the 1,000-yard plateau, giving the Aggies a 1,000-yard rusher and receiver tandem for only the fourth time in program history. The defense had no answer for freshman phenom Lamar Jackson, who tallied 453 total yards. Although it was a tough ending, the Aggies showed a lot of heart, battling to the end.

Q&A WITH
JORDAN JONES

ENERGY, EMOTION AND PASSION ARE THE KEYS TO HER GAME!



Tell me about your recruiting process coming to A&M.

It was different. You know, a lot of players go on different visits and go to different camps. I just came to A&M and went to the basketball camp. Then I came with Chelsea and C. Walk, and we just fell in love with the atmosphere and with this place, we just all wanted to be together. They gave us a great idea of what it would be like to play here. Sydney Carter and Sydney Co son did a great job of telling us what Aggie life is really like. So, once the coaches offered, it was really hard to say no because the people around here and the atmosphere were just too great.

Had you played AAU ball with those other girls?

Yes, we've been playing with each other for about eight years now, so that's pretty fun.

Had you guys always wanted to play in the same place?

We talked about what schools were recruiting us, but we had never really decided to go to the same school until we each came to A&M. Then it was like, "I really like A&M!" and we were like, "Me too, let's go there!"

Who all came with you?

Courtney Walker, Chelsea Jennings and Curtyce Knox.

What have these four years been like?

It's been a ride; you have your ups and downs. As far as being at A&M, there have been far more ups than downs. But that's just college life in general for any student. There were times when I doubted my potential and being here, but my parents always told me that the grass isn't always greener on the other side, and to learn to trust in God that I'm here for a reason. Being here, the coaches have been great. I feel that the teammates I've had and the relationships I've built are all going to mean something to me down the road in my life. I feel like the relationships are the most special thing I've gotten since I've been here at A&M.

In the times we live in now and the way athletes transfer, do you believe you're a role model for girls coming up when you talk about honoring your commitment?

Definitely. I have a lot of younger sisters, not by blood but by relationships. They talk to me about how I've been able to tough it out for four years and, you know, I just tell them that at every school the coaches are going to harp on you, and you're going to have situations on campus that you just don't agree with. I mean, that is going to follow you wherever you go. There's just not going to be one place that is perfect; you have to learn to take an institution and the ups and downs that they give you. I feel that these young girls listen to me because I have lived it. That is one great thing I can say about being a role model, I'm not just telling them what they want to hear, I've lived it and I can tell them how it's going to be. At the end of the day, I tell them it's their decision. But, you know, I just feel that people are too quick to give up and not just tough it out and reap the benefits of all the hard work they have put in.

Talk about your injury from last year, your rehab, and how you contributed when you weren't on the court.

It was tough because I've never had an injury to that extent, especially surgery and the rehab hours that are required for it. It hurt me at the beginning, and I was questioning God like, "Why? Why? Why?" I had done everything I could to prevent this and, eventually, I realized that there was nothing I could do to change it. After the surgery, I just went really hard in rehab with Matt Kee, my physical therapist. I didn't get to go home during the summer because I had rehab. Being around him for those three months was probably the best thing that happened to me. He did way more than just work on my knee; he worked on my mind, as well, by giving me quotes and inspiration. He was just that push factor that I really needed. I feel that I couldn't have gotten that any other place, which is a testament to the people they hire here. When I was doing that, it was hard, but I had to put on a smile for my teammates because they look up to me. I'm the leader, I'm the captain, so I had to do everything I could to show them that I was alright and that I still had their back whether I was on the court or not. They still really tended to me and listened to me, but I felt that the emotional factor of being out on the court was missing at the end of last year, so that's what I'm trying to bring back to the table now. The rehab was really intense. There were days that I cried. You know, Matt wanted that, he said there would be days that he would win and days I would win. But every day, you just have to come in

and get better. You have to want to get better. I feel like that was a great process for me.

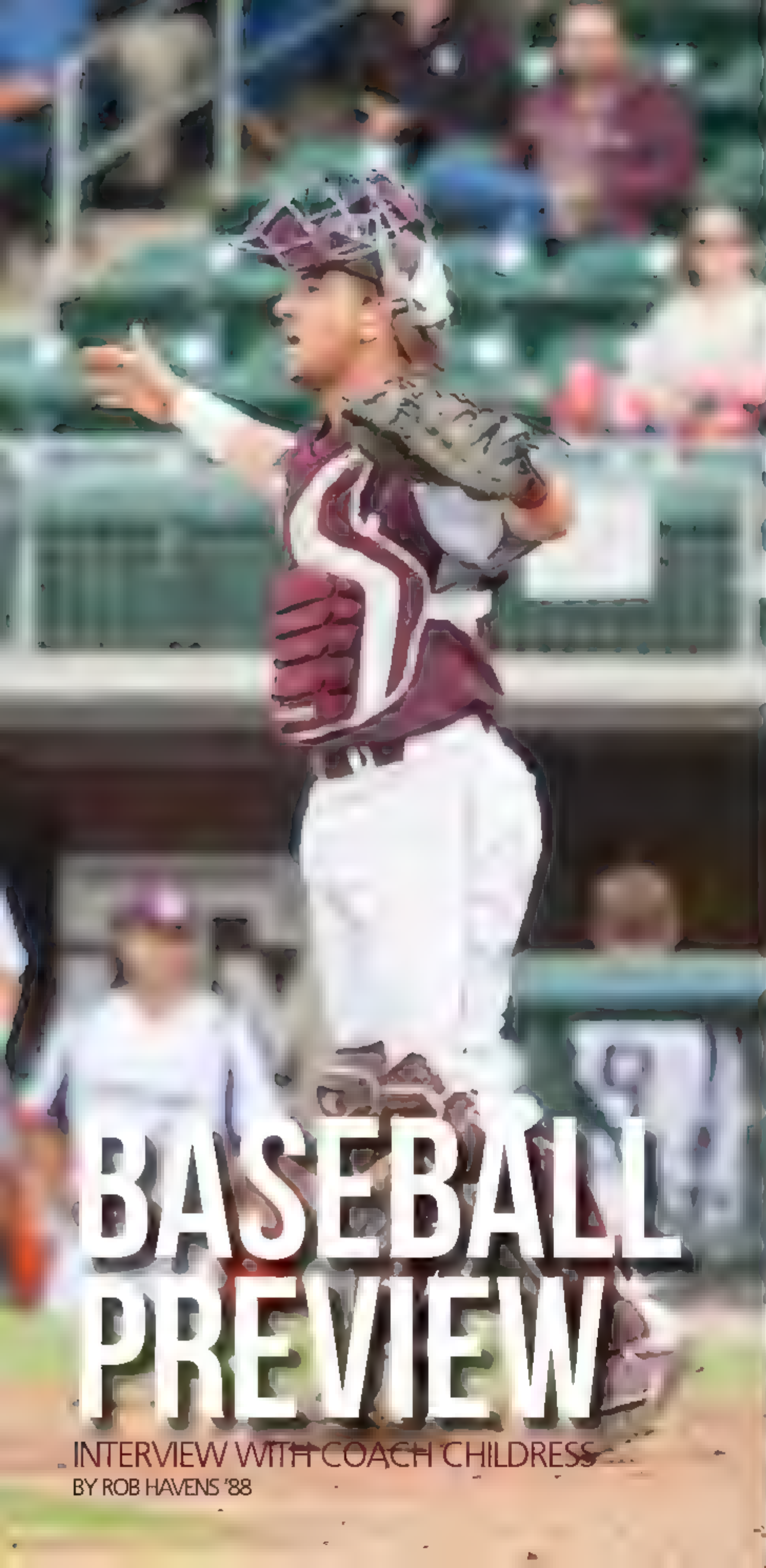
Percentage-wise, where do you think your health was entering the season?

Entering, it was about seventy-five to eighty percent. Now, before conference play, I'm ninety-two to ninety-five percent. I'm getting there.

Even before the season started, Coach Blair talked about preparing for the season with your rehab as a point of emphasis. What does that mean to you, knowing how important he believes you are to the success of this team?

It means a lot, you know, especially coming from the head coach. It just says that there is more to basketball than scoring and being in the paper all the time. I like doing all the dirty work for my team. You know, Courtney Walker and Courtney Williams are prolific players, they can score and they can do a lot, so I just accept the fact that that's who the media will tend to, but I don't let that define my game. I feel that Coach Blair does a great job of encouraging me and letting me know that this is my team and that what I do matters. I try to do everything this team needs, day in and day out, and I feel like that means more to the team than anything else I bring. I feel that how hard I will go in my energy and my emotion and my passion is what gets this team going.





Tell me about this year's team.

We had a really good fall. We have a strong nucleus of guys back. In the fall, we had our tenth annual Aggie Baseball Paint-a-thon, and then the Omaha Challenge Cup started. We broke the two teams up as evenly as we possibly could. Everything we do all fall is a competition, from class attendance to grades, to community service, to effort in the weight room, and then actually the games that we played. Everything matters. We've been doing this for ten years, and it's a great case study in that it's kind of the way it is in the spring when you start talking about the fourteen teams in the SEC. There's not a lot of separation between number one and number twelve, from a talent standpoint. It's all the stuff that maybe doesn't show up between the lines that really kind of separates first place from fifth place. We have a lot of experience back with Michael Barash behind the plate, Hunter Melton at first base, and Ryne Birk at second base. Boomer White is going to be plugged in at third base. Ronnie Gideon will see time at both corner positions and DH. In the outfield, you obviously start with Nick Banks from the standpoint of a special player. JB Moss, Jonathan Moroney, and Blake Kopetsky are three seniors that have an awful lot of experience as well. Joel Davis is a junior college transfer that will be out there too; he's a left-handed hitter that's big and strong and has a really good approach. At shortstop, the one position I didn't mention—a quarterback position on the field—we'll have two freshmen that battled it out in the fall, and will continue to battle it out. George Janca from Georgetown is a long, lanky kid that's very sure with his glove and has a strong arm, while Alan Campero from Laredo reminds me a lot of Mikey Reynolds; he's a come-and-get-it, explosive runner with great feet and an above average arm. Both of those guys are fun to watch, and both of them are going to get opportunities in the spring. We just need to make all of the routine plays at short. They're going to hit at the bottom of the order and keep the offense moving along. We need to bunt, be able to move runners, hit and run, take their walks; you know, play great defense. That's what we need out of those guys. On the pitching side of things, we've got an awful lot of experience back in that respect, as well, and some guys with some really, really, big arms.

BASEBALL PREVIEW

INTERVIEW WITH COACH CHILDRESS

BY ROB HAVENS '88

Have you got an idea of what kind of pitching rotation you will have at this point?

Not really. We always talk about the fall being a stagnating process; putting yourself in the photograph and doing enough to be in the frame of that picture. When we get back in January, it's all about being healthy and being ready to go. Kyle Simonds is a senior, he pitched out of the bullpen for us and had a chance to start this fall and did a really good job. Andrew Vinson is another senior that had an amazing fall for us. Both of those guys were mainstays in the bullpen for us last year, but I don't know that both of them will start. I think that we'll probably use one in the bullpen and have that experience factor. Ryan Hendrix and Mark Ecker will probably stay at the back end of the bullpen, and we'll extend them a bit from the standpoint of putting six outs on them every other day. Corbin Martin had a really, really good fall as well. He's up to 96, 97 miles per hour and has really good stuff. Tyler Ivey is a true freshman out of Rockwall that had an amazing fall, as good a fall as a freshman has had in a long, long, time. He has really good stuff. Jace Vines is a transfer from Tyler Junior College, and he's going to be in the mix to start as well. He had an amazing fall. So, we do have a lot of options on the mound. It's always a good problem to have. I've never said at the end of June, "Man, we had too much pitching. We didn't find enough work for all these

guys." But we do have some very talented guys and a lot of experience, too.

Talk about the recruiting class that you just signed.

We ended up having thirteen guys as a part of this class. Justin Seely and Will Bolt did an amazing job putting it together, and it's not just something that wound up happening over the course of last summer and came to fruition in November in the signing period. It's something that they've worked really hard at for the last two or three years; especially Justin, being the recruiting coordinator. This may be the most talented group of position players we've had in some time. You know, that's the most exciting thing. We've got guys from Nebraska and Colorado, but obviously, the foundation of it is the Texas high school kids. Our hope is that we get each and every one of those kids to campus and through the draft next June.

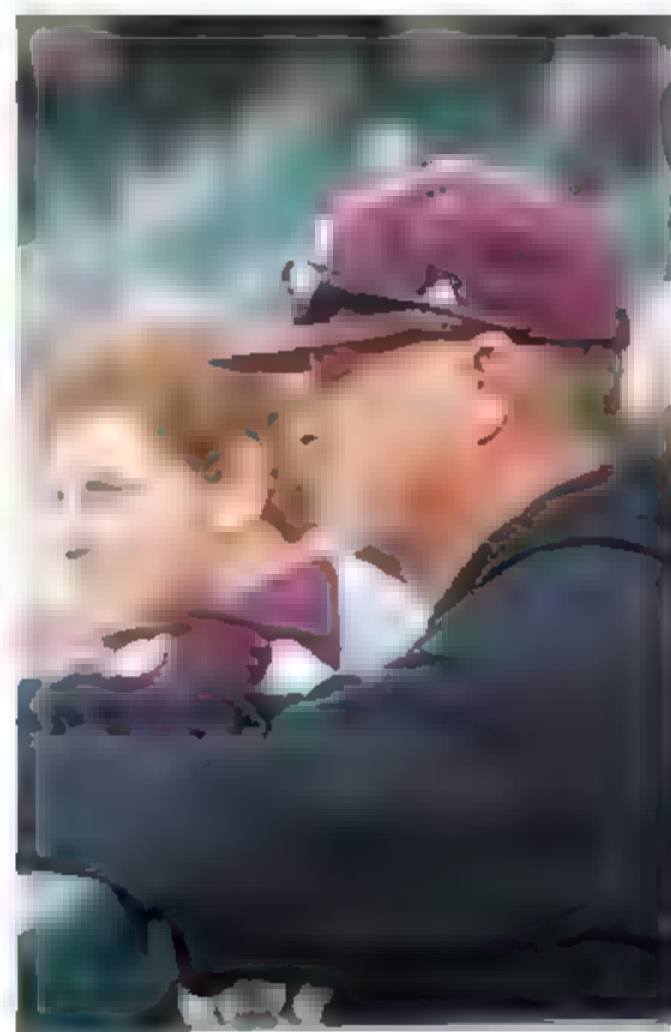
Who do you count on for leadership from this squad?

We have a lot of guys that can be counted on to lead. Michael Barash comes to mind; he plays with such great energy each and every day. Also, Ryne Birk and Nick Banks. Those three position players do an amazing job in demanding excellence from themselves and from each and every teammate. On the pitching side of things, Kyle Simonds, Andrew

Vinson and Ty Schlottmann are three guys that do a great job from a leadership standpoint. Jace Vines is another player that leads by example and isn't afraid to speak up. Positionally, I'd throw Hunter Melton into that category as well. He gives you everything he's got each and every day; he doesn't just ask that of you but gives it of himself as well.

Do you have a feel about this year's team?

They're going to be different from any other team. Our goals are no different, though. Finish at the top of the SEC, be a national seed and host throughout the post season, get to Omaha, and win a national championship. The 2016 team's identity is going to be forged throughout the course of each and every day that we are together. It started as we went through the fall and will continue into January and on to opening day on February 19th. They are a fun group to be around, they work really hard and demand a lot from one another. They do things the right way, and that's a great place to start. They've been fun thus far. Once you start writing one lineup, and everybody doesn't get to play like they do in the fall and in January, then you find out more and more about yourself and about your group. You only get to play nine, and you only get to run one arm out there at a time; it's about putting the team first and yourself second.





I'm really excited about this team. Last year we had forty wins with a bunch of freshmen, so that's encouraging to me. We are definitely a more athletic team this year, a deeper team. We added four freshmen to our roster and all four of them have a chance to be starters. That's unusual for an entire class, and they have the potential to make a real impact. It's a strong class

Sam Show, our freshman out of East Bernard (who won the state championship), was the two time Gatorade player of the year. She's a pitcher, a hitter, and a first baseman. She will make an immediate impact on our program as a freshman, and we expect her to be in the starting rotation. Trinity Harrington is a transfer out of Colorado State. She played her freshman year at CSU and transferred here in the fall. She's done a great job, and she'll be in our starting rotation as well. Both of those pitchers had a really good fall. At about 5'11" (close to 6') they're a bigger presence, and they both throw the ball hard.

Another freshman is Riley Sartain. Defensively, she could start at any number of positions, she's just that good. Offensively, she has the chance to be very good. It's always tricky with offense. You can say as a defensive player you kind of know what you're going to get, but offensively, it's just a completely different experience for the freshmen coming in. They see pitching they have never seen, and they have coaches that have scouted them and dissected everything about their swing and about their approach at the plate. So, by the time we play in the SEC, those coaches know everything about the new kids, whereas before, they could kind of fly under the radar as freshmen. Now that we're on the SEC Now network, there are no secrets. Riley is a terrific player. She's out of Aledo, who are two time state champions, and she's just a really solid kid.

Kaitlyn Alderink is a freshman out of Keller. She's a lefty hitter, a righty thrower, and plays second base. She's got terrific range and really has a chance to be in the starting lineup. She plays second base as well as several infield positions; she plays the middles. She's a spark plug! She has good speed and can hit away

Keeli Milligan is the other freshman. She's an outfielder and has a chance to start in left field for us, to be in the one/two spot. She has lots of speed, she's a really quick base stealer, a real threat on the bases. She doesn't just have good speed, she also has good instincts and creates havoc out there. She creates opportunities for herself

All four of those freshmen are great kids, fun to coach and loving their Aggie experience

At pitcher, we're looking at Katie Marks returning. She had surgery in the summer but is back at about seventy-five percent, I'd say. No question, she will be at one-hundred percent by the time we start this season. She's now pitching full-out, you know, not limited to the pitches she is throwing. She'll make huge strides between now and February. So, looking in the circle, we could have three in the starting rotation. Or, we could have two; we'll just see how it goes.

Kayla Ober is definitely going to be a relief pitcher, middle

SOFTBALL PREVIEW

COACH EVANS TALKS ABOUT
THIS YEAR'S SQUAD

BY ROB HAVENS '88

relief closing. The great thing about her is that she's a great complement to the other pitchers, especially Trinity and Sam who throw really hard. They are in the 66, 67 mph range, and then you have Kaya who's around 60, so it's a different look.

Behind the plate, Ashley Walters, who started last year as a freshman, returns. She has a lot more power than she did last year, which is exciting. I expect her to hit more home runs than she did last year. She looks good behind the plate, has a good arm. Her arm is even stronger than it was last year. I'm excited about her.

We have a couple of other kids behind the plate as well. One is Hailey Rebar, who's a sophomore this year. She's a big lefty, throws well, and really has made good strides defensively and offensively. She hit her first home run in the fall, so we're really starting to understand how to use her power. Celena Massey also caught for us some last year.

First base is kind of loaded, so we're kind of looking to see who's going to be swinging the bat. We've got some kids we can use there. We've bumped Tori Vidales over from third to first because of Riley Sartain. If Riley's bat is where we need it to be, she would most likely start at third and Tori would play first base.

It's nice to have that flexibility. That's what I'm referring to when I say that we have more depth, more athleticism. We've got Tori Vidales, who started every game last year, at third now, and she could potentially play at first. And we have a freshman over there. Brea Dozier, who has crazy power, is a kid we are really counting on this year as a senior. We need her power in the lineup. In one game in the fall, she had three at-bats and three home runs, all to different fields. She had a really good fall, and I'm excited about her. Reagan Boenker is another one that could play there. Sam Show could play there. Even April Ryan, who started at second for us her freshman and sophomore years, could now move to first base. If Alderink ends up hitting and being in our lineup, it could bump April Ryan to first.

Kristen Cuyos started as a freshman at shortstop for us last year, and my expectation is that she will continue to play there. She also plays a really good third base, so again, we have lots of interchangeable parts and pieces there. Kristen has more power offensively and I expect her to hit a lot more home runs. I think last year she hit ten home runs, so I expect her to hit around fifteen, even upwards to twenty this next year.

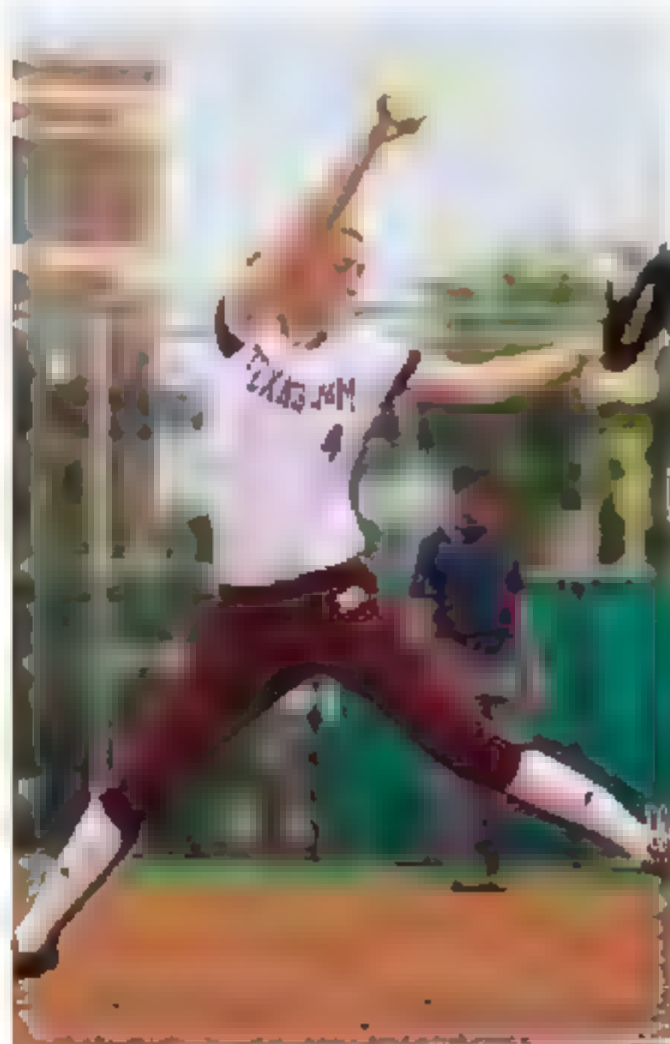
In left field, we talked about Keeli. We also have Alex Masek, who is a senior, working in all the outfield positions. Her

key will be consistency at the plate. She had a good fall, so I'm encouraged by that.

Erica Russell started quite a bit for us in center field. Defensively, she's outstanding. She has a great, accurate arm with great range, and she can dive and make great catches. Offensively, she made really great strides and has worked really hard over the summer to perfect her swing. I'm excited to see if she can take all that hard work into a game and be an offensive threat for us.

In right field, you have Cali Lanphear, who had a great fall. She had a great freshman year and then struggled a little bit, but now she's back to her form. She hit some monster home runs for us and just looks really comfortable out there.

We could potentially start a freshman on the mound, a sophomore behind the plate, a sophomore at first, a freshman at second, a sophomore at short, a freshman at third, a freshman in left, a sophomore at center, and a senior in right. And then DP could be the senior, Dozier. It's a young, young team, but a really exciting team. It's not one of those deals where I'm trying to talk myself into, "Oh, we're young; oh, that enthusiasm; it's great!" It's actually a really talented group of freshmen and sophomores who have a chance to leave a mark.



Did you know?

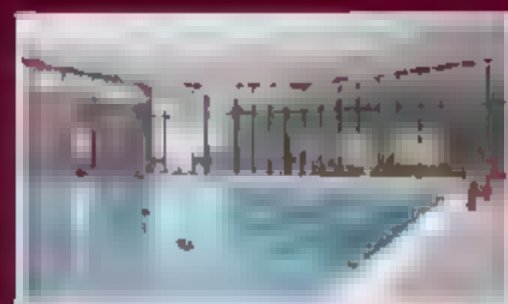
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Ice Hockey Team

BY ROB HAVENS '88

Texas A&M offers students a variety of sport clubs to participate in. Sometimes students with little or no experience are able to join a club and begin playing right away, while others require a little more experience before joining. Whether you have the experience to play or you just love to watch, the Texas A&M Ice Hockey Team is one of the most exciting sport clubs on campus.



The sport of ice hockey requires strength, agility and guts as players race around the ice, skating in all different directions. They can cut on a dime, come to a screeching halt, and avoid other skaters while flying across the slippery surface at top speed. The players love it and the fans can't get enough of it. Throw in the fact that the team gets to take on its arch rival, Texas, and you've got the perfect sport.

The club reformed in 1998 after being on campus in the 80s and became a member of the Sport Clubs Association in 2001. We asked club president Ethan

Palmer to tell us more. He said, "Members join because they love playing hockey and look to play for the school they love." The team plays Texas four times a year, and these exciting games always see a tremendous fan turnout.

The Aggies are one of the best teams in the region. They have dominated the state



of Texas in the last three years, posting a 9-1 record over Texas, 9-1 over Texas State, 9-1 over Dallas Baptist, and 4-0 over Texas Tech.

Most of the players have quite a bit of experience; with a few exceptions, most have been playing for over ten years. The twenty-five men on the team practice two nights per week. The top ten teams in each region earn a spot at regionals, and the Aggies have secured their spot four out of the last six years.

Palmer says the friendships he has made are his favorite thing about being on the team. "Hockey, more so than other sports, is about brotherhood. It's about sticking up for your teammates and having each other's back. Road trips and team functions are great for bonding, and teammates become good friends over the course of the season."

Gymnastics Team

BY ROB HAVENS '88

You may have never been to a gymnastics meet at Texas A&M, but there is a good chance that, while on your way to an Aggie football game, you've seen some Gymnastics Club members raising money for their club by performing "Flips for Tips" on a mini tramp outside the Rec Center.

These talented men and women are members of one of the oldest sport clubs on campus. Beginning in 1923, the club initially started as a tumbling exhibition team. Other elements were added through the years until the club encompassed the entire sport of competitive gymnastics.

Club president Katie Thompson joined the team after coming to A&M

and seeking a way to continue competing in the sport she had been involved with for over ten years. We asked her about her favorite moment on the team, and she told us, "It was my freshman year at

nationals when we found out that both the men's and women's teams won national titles. That was a very special moment for the whole club." Last year both squads brought home third place; their goal this year is to improve on that.

The club currently consists of close to fifty members, about half of whom will compete this year, and all of whom come from a variety of backgrounds. Some competed as kids and want to continue doing so in college, while some are brand new to the sport. Thompson said, "Overall, I think people join the club because of everything the sport of



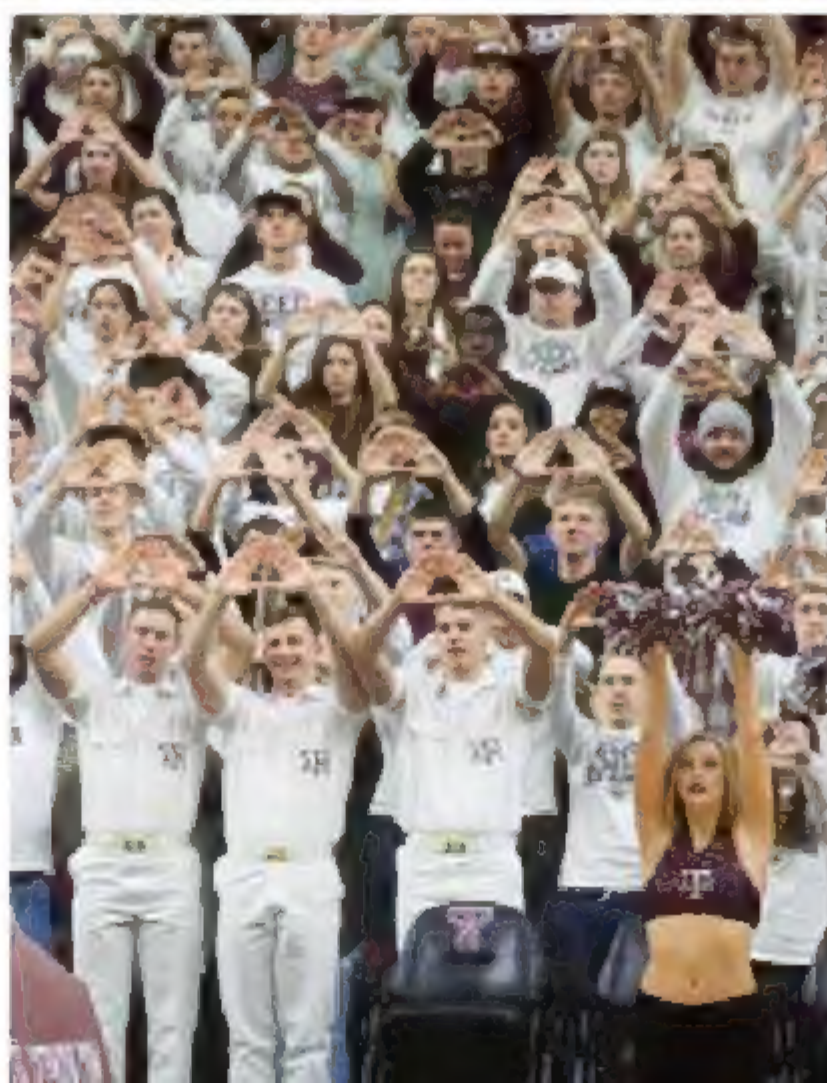
gymnastics has to offer, and they stay with it because they love the club's close-knit team environment."

The women's team's biggest rival is Texas, while the men's rivals are Texas and Oklahoma. The team competes in the spring, and on April 2nd the club will host the TGC Conference Championships in the PEAP building on campus. The women's team captain, Madelyn Fletcher, was the TGC all-around champion last year. Co-president Andrew Archer is the reigning national vault champion.

The team receives an annual allocation from the Department of Recreational Sports and supplements its travel expenses to tournaments by holding fundraisers such as Flips for Tips.



Visit recsports.tamu.edu for more info about Texas A&M Sport Clubs.





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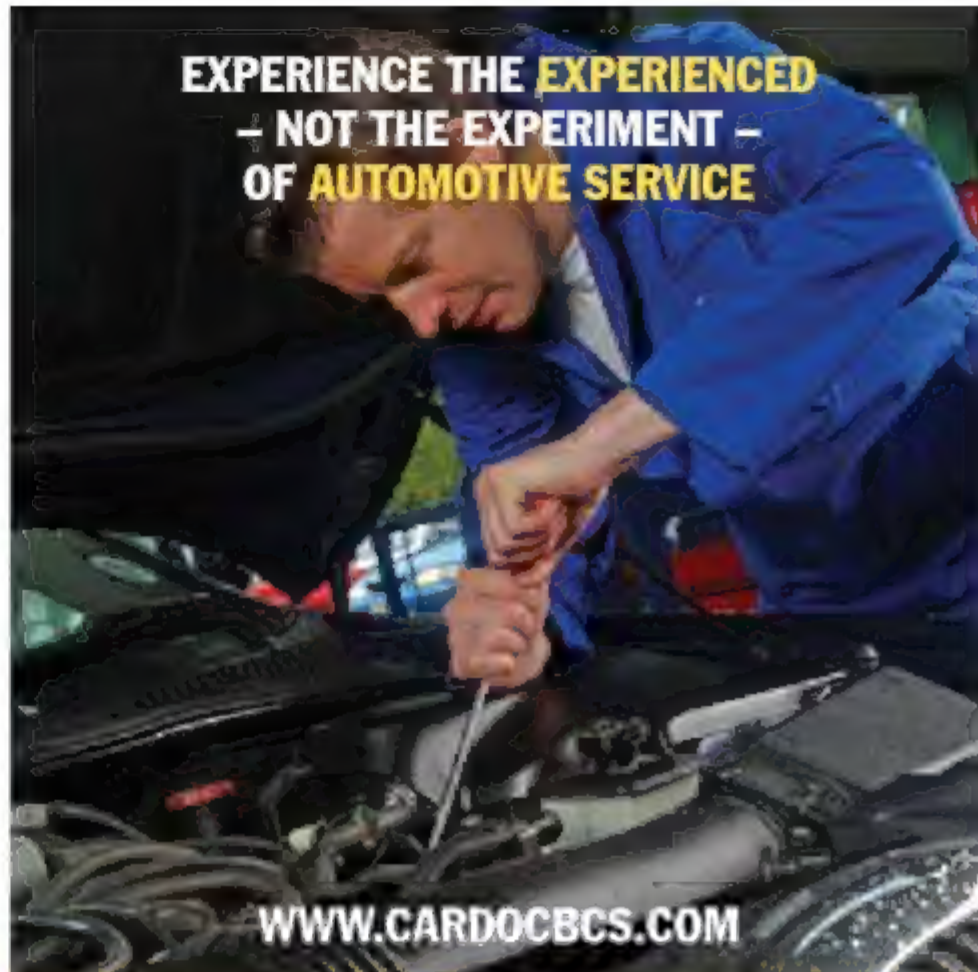
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